



TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK Economic Development Commission

Carol Conklin, Chair
Elizabeth Swenson, Vice Chair
John DeCristoforo, Secretary/Treasurer

302 Main Street • Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06475
Telephone (860) 395-3139 • FAX (860) 395-3125

Joseph Arcari
David Cole
James Keating
Matthew Pugliese
Bruce Greenfield, Alternate
Sandra Roberts, Alternate

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

October 20, 2015
Saybrook Point Pavilion
7:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Carol Conklin called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Members present: Carol Conklin, Elizabeth Swenson, James Keating, David Cole, Matthew Pugliese, Joseph Arcari, Sandra Roberts, John DeCristoforo

Members absent: None

Staff present: Susan Beckman, Economic Development Director; Christine Nelson, Town Planner; Chris Costa, Zoning Enforcement Officer; Meryl Moskowitz, Recording Clerk

OLD BUSINESS

A. Mariner's Way

1. Proposed Zoning Changes – Discussion of proposed changes with property owners and the public.

C. Conklin explained this is a work in process, with a long term goal of revitalization around a theme, to make the zone areas more consistent for developers, and to create an add-value overlay zone. She emphasized that input from the audience will be helpful.

James Keating, who was an original member of the group that developed the Mariner's Way Plan, gave a brief background of how the task force came together. He explained that the Town Plan of Conservation & Development had identified the area of Route 1 as most in need of a development plan. The First Selectman appointed a task force to put together a plan for the Route 1 corridor. The task force comprised a diverse group of people who met for about a year. Mariner's Way is the area from Saybrook Junction to the pedestrian path at the Baldwin Bridge. The name is meant to tie in to the maritime heritage of Old Saybrook.

Mr. Keating explained that since the town does not own the property within the area known as Mariner's Way, the group can suggest what they'd like to see, not enforce it. The task force envisioned a wide path along one side of Route 1, with small buildings along Route 1 that would be mixed activity, i.e. businesses, possibly with apartments above, and possibly a branch of a university. The overall purpose of the Mariner's Way Plan is to enhance the value of the properties and not take anything away.

The Economic Development Commission was tasked by the First Selectman with implementation of the Plan. Mr. Keating explained that the EDC is to come up with one or more petitions to the Zoning Commission, asking them to change some zones in an attempt to implement the Mariner's Way plan. The group understands that the existing mix of zones is a constraint to developers.

Mr. Keating used maps to help describe the two areas adjacent to the core of the project (Mystic Market/Mill Rock area and Ferry Point) as the “book end” areas of Mariner’s Way. He emphasized that the EDC wants input from the public and that they will consider the public’s ideas, suggestions, and issues, make changes to the Plan as appropriate, and then bring their petitions to the Zoning Commission early in 2016.

A member of the audience asked who is going to pay for this development? Mr. Keating replied that developers/commercial property owners will pay for improvements on their properties.

A member of the audience asked “Are you going to make it easier for developers to come in?” Mr. Keating replied, “Yes, hopefully.”

A member of the audience expressed concern about the maps they have received, and interpreted the pink dashed line as a walkway. J. Keating stated the pink dashed line outlines the pedestrian node and is not a walkway. Zoning Enforcement Officer Chris Costa explained that any parcel of land that goes along Boston Post Road by the entrance of I-95, that has frontage, is in the pedestrian node, and that the proposed change does not apply to single family residential homes or development already permitted. [?]

A member of the audience asked if a Dunkin Donuts can come into the Marine Commercial District. C. Costa stated that nothing changes in the regulations for the Marine Commercial District.

Town Planner Christine Nelson explained that the Pedestrian Node is meant to reinforce the walkability of the neighborhood, and does not affect anyone with a single family home.

Comments about garbage were made by audience members, concerned that there is garbage in this area now and with more pedestrians more garbage would be present, and the town is not doing anything about cleaning it up.

The owner of Ferry Point Marina commented that a commercial property may have an enticement to put in a sidewalk, but there’s no requirement for adjacent residential property owners to do so. He asked what’s the point of putting in sidewalks, if it stops at residences?

C Nelson explained that the Town has a sidewalk plan, a capital improvement plan, and as developers come in (of larger properties) they are asked to put in sidewalks. The town may fill in elsewhere.

A member of the audience, Susan Voigt, commented that the map of the Pedestrian Node omits a major area that has the possibility of being developed. She asked why this area is excluded, stating it is unfair. C. Nelson explained that that commercial corridor of Route 1 is automobile oriented, and that a bikeway/pedestrian path is proposed. Susan believes it’s denying the area the benefits of the Pedestrian Node.

A member of the audience asked about parking and does not want people taking up her business’s parking spaces if they are not customers.

The owner of Eric’s towing made a point about having started his business in the middle of town. He then moved to a B-4 zone. What happens if he wants to sell his business? J. Keating stated that he will be grandfathered and that the grandfathering goes with the property.

The owner of Roots’ Auto stated he opposes limiting his ability to sell his property to only an auto business.

A question was asked about wetlands and about proposed condos. J. Keating stated he is absolutely certain the Zoning Commission will take into consideration the wetlands. She wants businesses that are technical businesses, like Brockway Boats, or businesses that would attract craftsmen. She’d like to see businesses that can offer good paying jobs.

A member of the audience stated manufacturing will be limited to three employees in the proposed B-3 zone. J. Keating pointed out that the opportunity for larger manufacturers lies in the proposed Mariner's Way Overlay zone.

A member of the audience asked "Why not add to the B-4 zone instead of taking away from it?"

Will the area by Ocean Performance change from B-3 to B-4? No, it will remain B-3.

The owner of Root's Auto asked if someone could potentially put in a Walmart or other "Big Box" store and the answer is yes if it's in the proposed Mariner's Way Overlay area (to be discussed Nov 10) if it is set back from the road.

A member of the audience commented about traffic and believes that with more business near the intersection of Ferry Road and Essex Road "this will be a debacle" for traffic.

J. Keating summarized by stating that the EDC is proposing taking a piece that is a little bit of B-4 and a little bit of industrial and making it into a B-3, and changing a B-4 to a B-3. The plan is to transition from an automotive environment to a more pedestrian environment. He understands there are concerns.

Old Saybrook resident and attorney, David Royston, addressed the Commission about the Pedestrian Node. He stated he agrees wholeheartedly with the comments about not changing any underlying zoning. D. Royston stated that when describing the Pedestrian Node there's a regulation that states if your property is in the Pedestrian Node, for non-residential usage, you have a reduced setback.

There was confusion about the proposed Pedestrian Node being a map change. C. Costa explained that the Pedestrian Node is not a map change but a change in the Pedestrian Node regulation which will be amended to include the Ferry Point area. The outline on the map is for demonstration to indicate the area included in the proposed Pedestrian Node.

D. Royston spoke about parking and asked the Commission to consider providing public parking and to include that in the regulations. He said that the Pedestrian Node regulations as written, allow a 10 ft setback from the road, but that is not extended into Mariner's Way where setbacks are farther from the road. He also said the proposed amendments in the Marine Commercial zone and Industrial zone require all development to go get special exception approval.

C. Nelson explained that the purpose of the Pedestrian Node is to bring non-residential properties closer to the street and create a well-defined walkable area.

J. Keating reiterated that all comments will be considered, and they will make whatever changes are deemed appropriate for the petitions to Zoning.

The Roots Auto owner remarked that if you bring in big stores you're going to affect smaller businesses, and they'll have to close their doors.

One participant thanked the Commission for providing the Mariner's Way plan and notifying the property owners and abutters of the proposed changes so that comments and concerns could be heard.

C. Conklin restated that this is not a closed process, that questions and comments are welcome even after this meeting.

The next meeting is November 10.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Meryl Moskowitz
Recording Clerk

